Structure of a thesis

Title

This should reflect the contents of the report, as well as how the research has been undertaken. It should not be too long, and should not simply be the main research question or hypothesis.

Abstract

This is simply a summary of 250 – 300 words, describing the broad aims of the work and the conclusions.

List of contents

This can be used to list both the chapters and the sectors within the chapters. It helps the marker to understand a little more about the structure of the project.

List of figures/tables

These should be listed, alongside any sources for them.

Preface

This is usually not necessary, but tends to be a personal statement from the author about the rationale for the study.

Acknowledgements

This is to acknowledge the people who have helped the student with the research. It is amazing how many people acknowledge everyone including their pets and then forget their supervisor!

Introduction

This should outline the background and purpose of the study, setting out the aims, objectives, questions or hypotheses in a way that provides the reader with an understanding about how the project is contributing to the development of knowledge.

Literature review

As we will see, this should deal with the knowledge and concepts that underpin the study. It is necessary to be selective in order to provide a theoretical study underpinning the study.

Methodology

This should discuss the various research methodology(ies) as well as the research methods used within the study, and illustrate how such methods are meeting the questions/hypotheses. It is important to explain and justify why each of the methods was chosen, and also to describe how the data have been analysed, while accepting some of the limitations of the research.

Results

In this section, the results should be set out, perhaps in a fairly structured way, in response to a theme, aim or issue.

Analysis/Discussion

This is usually one of the more difficult areas of a research project and requires a lot of time. In this section everything should be brought together and synthesised, so that the results and literature can be discussed and related to the original aims of the project.

Conclusions/Recommendations

In this section, the researcher needs to decide how well the research aims and objectives have been achieved through summarising the research. The report could make recommendations for further research, and draw some key conclusions.

References/Bibliography

This should be an alphabetical list of authors cited or used within the report, using the system specified by the particular establishment.

Appendices

Appendices are useful for inserting related information, often too detailed to include in the main report. This might also include interviews and other method-related data.